DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 557 CS 213 506

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Evaluation of Achievement in Language Arts.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 24p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Objectives; Elementary Education; *Language Arts; *Student Evaluation; Teacher Made Tests; *Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

A critical task of the language arts instructor is evaluation. Pupils' products in the language arts must be continuously assessed in order that optimal progress may be in evidence. Achievement of pupils must be recorded periodically so that a pattern of behavior on the part of each child may be observed. Also, the teacher can notice more effectively which pupils need increased guidance and assistance in achieving desired objectives. Folders, tape recordings, rating scales and checklists, teacher developed tests, and essay tests can be used to measure learning achievement in the language arts and to diagnose problems. Based on diagnosis, the teacher may then guide learners to realize desired objectives as a result of teaching and learning. Finally, teachers need to frequently evaluate their own teaching, and ask themselves questions as to whether they stimulate pupils, offer them choices, and encourage them to evaluate their own achievement. (Fifteen references are attached.) (PRA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Marlow Ediger

1992

EVALUATION OF ACHIEVEMENT IN LANGUAGE ARTS

ED349557

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marlow Ediger

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS213506

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Marlow Ediger

1992

EVALUATION OF ACHIEVEMENT IN LANGUAGE ARTS

The teacher must be an effective evaluator of pupil achievement in the language arts. Thus, the teacher must have ample knowledge of each pupil's growth in achieving desired objectives. The language arts instructor should be able to assess present achievement levels of learners in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Realistic objectives for learners to achieve may then be stated. Objectives should be attainable for each pupil. A further important task of the language arts teacher is to select those learning activities from which all pupils can benefit to their optimum. Last, but not least of all, the language arts instructor must be able to assess if appropriate appraisal procedures are being utilized.

> There are many ways to assess learner achievement in the different curriculum areas of the elementary school. Not all approaches to evaluating pupil achievement evaluate in the same facets of development. For example, using sociometric devices evaluates learners in social development. It does not assess pupils in general intellectual development. A standardized achievement test evaluates pupils in growth pertaining to different curriculum areas in the elementary school. It would not evaluate personal and social development of pupils. Thus, a variety of evaluation devices must be used to assess learners intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.[1]

[1]Marlow Ediger, Relevancy in the Elementary Curriculum. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 1975, page 193.

CS213506

Evaluating Pupils' Products

The teacher of language arts must be highly competent in assessing pupils' products in the language arts. A folder should be kept on each pupil pertaining to written products that have been presently completed as well as those which will be completed later on. The date of completion should be written on each finished product. Comparisons may then be made of earlier work of a child as compared to a presently completed product.

It is important for pupils to engage in an ample number of learning experiences involving creative writing. Comparisons might also be made then of a child's past and present achievement in creative writing. The teacher must answer questions such as the following when assessing an individual child's achievement in creative writing in comparing earlier with present progress:

1. Is the child expressing more of novelty and uniqueness in his ideas?
2. Does it appear that the pupil has more confidence than formerly in expressing original ideas?
3. Is the child eager to participate in learning activities involving creative writing?
4. Does the child engage in creative writing during leisure time, inside or outside of the class setting?

5. Does the child have an inward desire in wanting to express ideas creatively?

6. Is the child accepting of creative products of other learners?

7. Does the child have a desire to share creative products with others?

8. Do parents give support in having their child express content in a creative manner?

It is of utmost importance to assess pupil progress in the area of creative writing. Creative thinking is a major goal for elementary school pupils to achieve. Improvements in society come about due to creative endeavors of selected individuals. Thus, teachers, supervisors, and principals must think of important objectives, learning activities, and evaluation procedures in creative writing for pupils.

Tape-recordings of each pupil's achievement in oral communication could be dated, evaluated, and stored. Comparisons may then be made of learner achievement in oral communication of earlier with present performance. Pupils individually and with teacher guidance may evaluate their earlier with present achievement in the following speaking activities:

1. taking part in discussions.
2. presenting oral reports.
3. making introductions.
4. conducting interviews.
5. reading content orally.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

6. participating in creative dramatizations.

Recording Pupil Achievement

Teachers should record pupil behavior to observe meaningful patterns. It is easy to forget individual pupil behavior unless it is recorded at regular intervals. Thus, a behavioral journal ultimately results with representative behavior recorded of each pupil. The following standards should be followed when writing entries of observed learner behavior:

1. Random behavior should be recorded and not unusual deeds and acts unless these are persistent behaviors.
2. Comments written should accurately describe observed behavior. Loaded or vague words should not be used.
3. Recorded behavior should only be used to help the teacher do a better job of teaching.

Jarolimek[2] wrote the following involving anecdotal records in recording pupil behavior:

> An anecdotal record is a description of some incident or situation in the life of the child. A collection of such descriptions of pupil behavior kept over a period of time, therefore, provides the teacher with a documentary acoount of changes of behavior that have occurred or are in progress. It is another way of systematically recording observations. Anecdotal records should indicate the date and time off the incident, the circumstances under which it occured, and an

---

[2] John Jarolimek, Social Studies in Elementary Education. Seventh Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1990, page 353.

objective description of the situation. If an interpretation is made of the incident, it should be kept separate from the description of the actual happening. The following are six entries in one teacher's anecdotal record on a child.

ANECDOTAL RECORD
Sara Larsen
9/24 Difficult in getting going in independent choice work; ignored all suggestions of activities...It's boring.
9/26 Found a fiction book related to unit for Sara. Reading during work time. Took it home today.
9/27 Finished book...took suggestion to make a poster showing main characters.
10/1 Showed work. Talented artist. Received lots of compliments/support from classmates.
10/3 Sara asked for another book; suggest biography to her, plus suggested she do a map showing the area in which the person lived.

Rating Scales and Checklists

Behavior of individual pupils is recorded when rating scales and checklists are used. When using a rating scale, the teacher needs to write relevant behaviors pertaining to an ongoing unit of study in the language arts. The following ratings may be used as a basis for evaluation: "Excellent, Very Good, Average, Below Average, Needs Improvement." Each child should be assessed in terms of his or her present achievement level. One pupil should definitely not be compared against other learners since individuals differ from each other in many ways such as in capacity, motivation, interests, achievement, and energy levels. The following are examples of behaviors pupils individually could be assessed in pertaining to an ongoing unit of study:

Name of pupil_____Date_____

1. The pupil can write one sentence correctly for each of the five sentence patterns studied.
2. The pupil can expand a kernal sentence utilizing modification.
3. The pupil can change a declarative sentence to an interrogative sentence.

The teacher must remember that when rating scales are utilized to assess learner achievement, subjectivity is involved. For example, not every teacher assesses a pupil in the same way when sentences are written pertaining to different sentence patterns. Also, if rating scales are utilized by a teacher to assess pupils individually at later intervals, the evaluations will differ in terms of perception. The teacher then might not have the same perception when evaluating a pupil from one time to the next. The teacher, of course, does not feel the same way from one evaluation session to a second evaluation session. Teachers do not feel the same way on Tuesday morning as compared to Friday afternoon.

When using checklists, the teacher must list relevant behaviors to evaluate pupils in an ongoing unit of study. The following are examples of behaviors that might be written on a checklist:

Name of pupil_____ Date_____

1. The pupil writes sentences correctly pertaining to the subject-predicate pattern.
2. The pupil expands sentences correctly using appositives.
3. The pupil varies sentence patterns in writing.

The teacher checks behaviors that pupil need more help in. It is difficult for a teacher to realize fully which specific behaviors pupils need more assistance in unless they are recorded. The teacher may then give pupils needed guidance to overcome deficiencies.

Guidelines to follow when developing and using checklists pertain to the following:

1. Relevant behaviors need to be written by the teacher or by pupils with teacher leadership.
2. Behaviors must be written clearly so that agreement exists as to what is being diagnosed.
3. Pupil behavior must be carefully observed to determine if more appropriate learning activities are needed by pupils to overcome deficiencies.
4. The teacher might not have the same perception from one time to the next in evaluating each pupil in terms of recorded behaviors.

Dallmann3 lists the following as possible evaluative procedures to check skill in locating information:

1. The boys and girls can answer questions on various parts of a book such as: (a) In what part of a book is the index found? (b) In what part of a book--the table of contents or index--are the main entries arranged in alphabetical order?

2. The boys and girls can be timed as they find the beginning page on an entry in the table of contents or as they find the first page on which reference to an entry in the index is given.

3. The boys and girls can tell which word of a series would be the most likely one under which, in an index or encyclopedia, information to answer a given question would be found.

4. The pupils can be tested on ability to arrange letters and later words in alphabetical order. At first the arrangement of words in alphabetical order might deal only with lists of words in which the first letters are different. Later such lists could include words in which first letters of the words are alike and still later they could also include words in which the first and second, and still later, even subsequent letters are alike. The pupils can rewrite the letters or words in alphabetical order or they can number the words or letters in the right order.

5. The boys and girls can be checked on ability to select the meaning given for a word in a dictionary that fits into the context of the sentence in which the word is used.

Teacher Developed Tests

True-false, multiple-choice, matching, and completion items may not measure achievement as effectively in the language arts as compared to teacher observation of pupil progress in functional writing situations. However, there

---

[3]Martha Dallman, Teaching the Language Arts in the Elementary School. Third edition. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1976, pages 252 and 253.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

are important learnings of pupils that can be measured through the use of teacher developed tests. Consider the following true-false item:

A verb is a word that can be changed from singular to plural in number.

This test item can aid in determining if pupils understand what a verb is. To be sure, pupils can guess the correct response to a true-false item. A true-false test needs to be of adequate length to randomly survey what pupils have learned. However, a true-false test can be too lengthy; thus tiredness and fatigue set in during the testing session. Pupils may then hurry in taking the test rather than concentrating in revealing what is truly known. Guessing in a true-false test can be minimized by using a correction factor, e.g., counting the number of correct responses minus one-half times the number of incorrect responses. True-false items should be clearly written so that pupils accurately interpret their content. Test items should be written on the present reading levels of learners. If the content is written at a highly complex level, test results may indicate how well a child reads rather than understandings achieved in a language arts unit.

Pupils have a more difficult time guessing correct answers in a multiple-choice test as compared to responding to true-false items. In multiple-choice items, all responses should be rational. Consider the following multiple-choice item:

Which of the following sentence patterns emphasizes the subject-predicate pattern?

(a) Janice walks to school.

(b) The vase is colorful.

(c) Bill caught the cat.

(d) Jack gave Mike a dog.

Each of the four responses is reasonable in terms of being the correct response. Teachers, in some situations, have written three ridiculous responses together with one correct response in multiple-choice items. No doubt, most pupils then knew the correct response without appropriate learning experiences or study prior to taking the test. Each of the four responses in the multiple-choice item above is similar in length. If the responses vary much in length, clues may be given to the test taker as to which is the correct response. Each of the responses is correct in terms of stating a complete sentence. Notice the following multiple-choice item which is incorrectly written; pupils could identify the correct response due to speaking or writing in standard English:

Henry Wadswroth Longfellow was a

(a) engineer on a train in the 1880's.

(b) famous American poet.

(c) interested in inventions.

(d) agricultural and forestry specialist.

In this multiple-choice test item, response "b" only, would be grammatically correct. Each response in a

multiple-choice test item should be correct grammatically when it is matched with the stem.

Completion items may guide in evaluating pupil achievement. Relevant learnings should be emphasized in completion tests. The completion items should be written on the reading level of pupils. Adequate information needs to be contained in an item so that meaningful responses on the part of pupils might result. The following completion item lacks content as to its meaning:

_____and_____are_____in_____

Thus, the teacher needs to write meaningful test items. Consider the following which gives pupils needed information to succesfully complete the required blank:

A_____ contains two lines of rhymed verse of poetry.

Each blank should be the same length in a completion test so that clues are not given as to correct responses due to length of the blanks. If hand scoring is involved, the correct answers to the blanks in completion items could be written either to the left or in the right hand margin. This makes for ease in scoring the test. The content of the test should be on the reading level of pupils. The purpose of the test is to assess pupil understandings acquired rather than measure reading achievement.

Matching tests can aid in determining pupil achievement. Items in a matching test should be homogeneous. Homogeneous items involve assessing pupils in

content which deals with one topic. Notice the following items in a matching test:

_____ 1. free verse	a. shaped like a diamond
_____ 2. limerick	b. two lines of rhymed verse.
_____ 3. quatrain	c. contains five lines in the poem
_____ 4. haiku	d. based on the number of syllables per line.
_____ 5. couplet	e. rhyming is not necessary
	f. contains four lines of rhymed verse.

All the items above pertain to the writing of poetry. Validity in testing is important. Thus, pupils are being tested over what they have had opportunity to learn. Learners should not be tested over content that has not been taught. Pupils should do equally well if the same test were taken over again with no opportunity to study inherent related content. The latter generalization is stated to indicate the importance of consistency of results when taking a test; thus, the concept of reliability is important in developing and writing test items.

In writing matching items, the following standards should be followed:

(a) More responses should be written in one column as compared to the second column. The process of elimination then may not be used excessively when pupils respond to the final items in a matching test.

(b) It is important to have responses in one column which are short in length. Pupils might have a difficult time in making needed responses if column one having lengthy sentences is matched with column two also having lengthy sentences.

In the matching test on poetry, pupils are being evaluated in identifying different kinds of poetry. Better it is, to be sure, if pupils can write meaningful poetry which they enjoy and sense purpose in writing.

Using Essay Tests

Pupils can be evaluated in language arts achievement through the use of essay tests. Learners need to have an adequately developed writing vocabulary, however, to reveal desired understandings, skills, and attitudes in an essay test. When essay tests are utilized to evaluate pupil achievement in the language arts, the following criteria should be followed:

1. Approaches in testing as well as types of tests should be varied to provide for individual differences among children.
2. Pupils should sense purpose in the testing situation; that is, learners should desire to find out what they have or have not learned.
3. Testing should be diagnostic in determining specifically where pupils are experiencing

difficulty. Learning activities should then be provided to remedy the deficiencies.

4. Teachers should definitely not scold pupils based on perceived low test scores.

5. Testing situations should guide learners in developing an inward desire to learn.

6. Interest in learning should not be minimized or destroyed through testing.

7. Test items being responded to should be on the present achievement level of pupils.

In using essay tests to assess pupil achievement, the test items should be clearly written and appropriately delimited. The following essay items are too broad and general with many interpretations as to their meaning:

1. Discuss poetry.

2. Write a story.

Essay items can be delimited by writing them in the following manner:

1. Write a haiku poem.

2. Write a setting for a story of your own choosing.

The teacher has a better chance of evaluating pupil achievement in acquired specific learnings if the test items are properly delimited rather than containing ambiguous statements. Essay items can be too delimited whereby strictly factual answers are required, as would be true of the following items:

1. List the different parts of speech of the English language.

2. Name five different sentence patterns discussed in class.

Responses in terms of content to essay items should be assessed separately from the mechanics of writing, such as spelling, handwriting, punctuation, and capitalization. The mechanics of writing are always secondary in importance to ideas expressed in writing. In comparing formal and informal assessment, Farr and Beck[4] wrote:

> Comparing and contrasting formal and informal assessment may bring into clearer focus some of the relevent issues that concern both. Formal assessment is conducted to determine how much students have learned. Most often, formal assessment takes place at the end of some phase of instruction, such as the end of a school year or the completion of a unit of work or level of an instructional program. Formal assessment of this type is usually clearly identifiable. Students are told they are going to take a test, and the tests are presented in recognizable test format. there is no pretext that formal assessment is an integral part of instruction, sometimes (though not often enough) students are told the use to which the test results will be put.
>
> Informal assessment is an attempt to determine why students perform as they do rather than how well they perform. Informal assessment is exemplified by a teacher at a student's side looking over the student's shoulder and commenting that what the student has written might be organized more effectively. In these situation, students are often not even aware that they are being assessed. Indeed, they might view this assignment as the teacher simply commenting on their work, rather than as testing.

---

[4]Roger Farr, and Michael Beck, "Evaluating Language Development: 27A. Formal Methods of Evaluation" in Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991, page 489.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Self Evaluation by the Teacher

The teacher needs to evaluate his own teaching frequently in the language arts curriculum. The teacher must then ask and answer questions such as the following pertaining to teaching the language arts:

1. Do I reward puils in expressing creative ideals orally and in writing?
2. Are pupils stimulated adequately so that creative behavior is in evidence?
3. Do pupils enjoy learning experiences involving creative expression?
4. Are a variety of experiences available for pupils to express creative behavior such as in writing poetry, stories, and participating in dramatizations?
5. Are adequate opportunities available for pupils to make choices and decisions in the school/class setting?
6. Is teacher-pupil planning utilized in determining objectives, learning experiences, and evaluation procedures?
7. Do I encourage pupils to evaluate their own achievement in the language arts?
8. Is a good reading readiness program in evidence for kindergarten and first grade pupils?
9. Are learning experiences adequately individualized in the class setting?

10. Are adequate attempts made to determine present achievement levels of each learner?

11. Are conferences conducted frequently to determinme each child's interests, needs, and aspirations?

12. Is the reading program organized to provide for diverse interests and goals which learners have?

13. Do puils engage in realistic and meaningful experiences rather than emphasizing rote learning and memorization?

14. Is adequate emphasis being placed upon pupils being actively involved in ongoing learning activities?

15. Are pupils permitted to make decisions in terms of what is to be studied?

16. Can pupils utilize what has been learned previously?

17. Are pupils developing appropriate skills in working together well with others?

Thus, the teacher of language arts must be a good evaluator of pupil achievement in the language arts. The teacher must also be a good assessor of personal strengths and weaknesses in teaching the language arts. Individual differences among pupils must be provided for in a modern program of language arts in the elementary school. Eisner5 wrote:

> We sometimes seem to believe that the importance of what we do in school is determined by how well children do on tasks they will encounter later in schools or in colleges or universities. I take issue with such a conception. The major goals of schooling are not realized by performances on tasks defined in classrooms or within schools. The important effects of schools are located in the kinds of lives that children lead outside the school and the kinds of satisfactions they pursue there. In research terms, the major dependent variables of schooling are not scores on standardized achievement tests, whether norm- or criterion-references: they are the kinds of ideas children are willing to explore on their own, the kinds of critical skills they are able to employ on tasks outside classrooms, and the strength of their curiosity in pursuing the issues they will inevitably encounter in the course of their lives. Indeed, a much better index for school achievement than standardized achievement test scores is the level and quality of the conversations children engage in away from their classrooms.

In Summary

A critical task of the language arts instructor is evaluation. Pupils' products in the language arts must be continuously assessed in order that optimal progress might be in evidence. Achievement of pupils must be recorded periodically so that a pattern of behavior on the part of each child may be observed. Also, the teacher can notice more effectively which pupils need increased guidance and assistance in achieving desired objectives. Teacher made tests might aid in determining learner achievement in the language arts. Based on diagnosis then, the teacher may

---

[5]Eliot W. Eisner, "What Really Counts in Schools" in Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 5, February 1991, page 11.

guide learners to realize desired objectives as a result of teaching and learning. The language arts teacher certainly must continuously evaluate his or her own teaching to provide for optimum pupil achievement. Reynolds[6] wrote:

> Given the need for time at the beginning of the school year to learn about a new school culture and students, formal evaluation of competence probably should not begin until after the middle of the first year of guided, full-time teaching. At the time of formal summative evaluation for licensure, we should expect beginning teachers to be able to
>
> --Plan lessons that enable students to relate new learning to prior understanding and experiences;
>
> --Develop rapport and personal interactions with student;
>
> --Establish and maintain rules and routines that are fair and appropriate to students;
>
> --Arrange the physical and social conditions in the classroom in ways that are conducive to learning that fit the academic task;
>
> --Represent and present subject matter in ways that enable students to relate new learning to prior understanding and that help students develop metacognitive strategies;
>
> --Assess student learning using a variety of measurement tools and adapt instruction according to the results; and
>
> --Reflect on their own actions and students' responses in order to improve their teaching.

Questions and Problems for Consideration

1. In your own thinking, how can pupil achievement in the language arts be effectively evaluated?

---

[6]Anne Reynolds, "What is Competent Beginning Teaching? A Review of the Literature" in Review of Educational Research. Spring 1992, Vol. 62, No. 1, page 26.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2. Visit an elementary school classroom in operation; what procedures is the teacher utilizing to asses learner achievement?

3. Read several chapters on evaluation of pupil achievement from several college or university textbooks on the teaching of language arts.

(a) Which techniques of evaluation are discussed most frequently?

(b) What are the strengths and weaknesses of each technique discussed?

(c) Which techniques of assessing pupil achievement are mentioned least frequently? Why?

4. Consult a city school or state curriculum guide?

(a) Assess each evaluation technique that is listed in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

(b) How do the evaluation techniques relate to the stated objectives in the curriculum guide?

(c) In your opinion, do the learning activities in the curriculum guide pertaining to language arts meet standards such as the following:

1. Provision is made for individual differences.

2. The interests of pupils are strongly considered.

Selected References

1. Anderson, Paul S. Language Skills in Elementary Education. Second Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972. Chapter Nine.

2. Dallman, Martha. Teaching the Language Arts in the Elementary School. Third Edition. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1976, pages 252 and 253.

3. Ediger, Marlow. Relevancy in the Elementary Curriculum. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 1975, page 193.

4. Ediger, Marlow. Social Studies Curriculum in the Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 1980. Chapter Eight.

5. Eisner, Elliot W. "What Really Counts in Schools" in Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 5, February 1991, page 11.

6. Funk, Hal D., and De Wayne Triplett (Eds.). Language Arts in the Elementary School: Readings. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972. Part VI.

7. Farr, Roger, and Michael Beck. "Evaluating Language" "Development: 27 A. Formal Methods of Evaluation" in Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991, page 489.

8. Gagne, Robert D. Principles of Instructional Design. Third Edition. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1988.

9. Jarolimek, John. Social Studies in Elementary Education. Seventh Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1990.

10. Liebert, Burt. linguistics and the new english teacher. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971. Chapter Ten.

11. Nerbovig, Marcella H., and Herbert J. Klausmeier. Teaching in the Elementary School. Third Edition. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969. Chapter Seventeen.

12. Reynolds, Anne. "What is Competent Beginning Teaching? A Review of the Literature" in Review of Educational Research, Spring 1992, Vol. 62, No. 1, page 26.

13. Schuster, Albert H., and Milton E. Ploghoft. The Emerging Elementary Curriculum, Methods and Procedures. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970. Chapter Fourteen.

14. Shepherd, Gene, and William B. Ragan. Modern Elementary Curriculum. Sixth Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982.

15. Tiedt, Iris M., and Sidney W. Tiedt. Contemporary English in the Elementary School. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975.